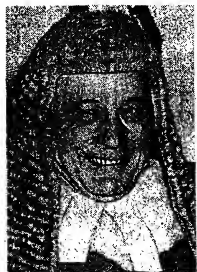


THIS is the time of the year when after-dinner oratory is in great demand and even greater supply. Anyone can make a speech and nearly everyone does, but I was genuinely surprised to discover the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Goddard, as the principal guest speaker at the City Pickwick Club dinner held at the ancient George and Vulture, Cornhill.

The chairman of the club is always addressed as Mr. Pickwick, thus keeping alive that



LORD GODDARD

immortal figure who was so unfairly dealt with in the court proceedings of *Bardell v. Pickwick*. With a deceptive seriousness Lord Goddard reviewed the famous trial and came to the conclusion that on the evidence it would have been difficult for the jury to find any other verdict than "Guilty."

It was all very well for Mr. Pickwick's counsel to argue that there was no hidden meaning in the written message "Chops and tomato sauce" which was left for Mrs. Bardell by Mr. Pickwick. When the Lord Chief Justice had finished with the case one felt that the law in all its majesty had been fully vindicated.

### Dickens-Blindness

IT is an indisputable fact that there are some people who cannot read Dickens. I have then heard men, apparently in their right minds, declare that they prefer Sir Walter Scott or even Thackeray. Since there is no legal method of compelling them to change their minds we can only hope that time in its infinite patience will cause them to see the light.

Or better still, let that grand old veteran Bransby Williams

give them the trial speech by Sergeant Buzfuz as he did to us at the George and Vulture. If that failed to convert them then we would have to let them wander in eternal darkness.

### England Invaded

BEFORE we leave this subject it should be noted that something really significant happened last Thursday evening when the London Ayrshire Society held its annual dinner. Here were the London Scots in all their splendid regalia as if to prove that the male of the species can always out-adorn the female if he sets about it.

But the significant feature was the nature of the principal toast: "The Land We Live In." Kind words were spoken about England and the English. Apparently we are a good people invaded over the years by the Romans, the Danes, the Normans, the Scots, the Welsh and the Canadians. But in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations the Englishman remains an Englishman. Which, as Sir William Gilbert contended, is greatly to his credit.

### The Case of Dr. Dalton

IT is an excellent thing that men who have held high positions should write their memoirs or, as in the case of Field - Marshal Alanbrooke, cause history to be compiled from their diaries. Therefore in principle we must commend Dr. Hugh Dalton, M.P. for giving us the Daltonian version of the tragic years that preceded the war with Hitler.

It is not for me to encroach upon the province of the literary critic and express any opinion about the book as a piece of literature. But it is quite another thing to deal with Dalton, the politician who held the high post of Chancellor of the Exchequer until he talked himself out of it by an indiscreet revelation of an emergency Budget.

Dr. Dalton has a forthright literary style which lends itself to such headings—which of course may not be his own unaided choice—as "How We Got Rid of that Old Limpet Chamberlain." Nor does the Doctor fail to recognise the verbal agility of others. For

example he quotes in his book an unspecified Tory rebel as saying to him during the Norway debate in 1940: "Chamberlain will stick on like a dirty old piece of chewing-gum on the leg of a chair."

I do not envy the mind which would create so cruel, so vulgar and so false a phrase. Nor do I envy the man who keeps it fresh in his memory for 17 years and then reproduces it in print.

### Fancy and Fact

IF we are to believe this "Inside Story" of the years of crisis, Dr. Dalton and his Socialist colleagues were clamouring for a showdown with Hitler, and Dalton was the chief apostle of Peace Through Strength.

In order not to do him an injustice I looked up the stormy debate when Mr. Chamberlain's Government introduced a vital measure of conscription to meet the darkening challenge of Nazi Germany. Did the eating Dalton speak in support of it? No. Did he vote in support of it? No. Did he abstain? No. He voted against it.

### Cough Cures

MANY letters have reached me in answer to my query as to why actors never cough on the stage whereas members of the audience, especially at this time of the year, are in full blast. Here are some of the points made:

A good actor is so immersed in his part that he ceases to be himself and becomes a creation of the dramatist. Thus Sir Laurence Olivier might have a cold but Hamlet would not.

A vicar was so aggressively attacked by his congregation with their coughing that he paused in his sermon and said: "Will the sympathetic coughers kindly desist and leave the field to the genuine coughers." Not a single cough was heard again during the rest of the service.

The "cough cure" is a psychological rather than a physical phenomenon. During tense and gripping scenes (and this applies to the cinema as well as the theatre) an audience will so identify itself with one of the characters or one of the situations in the drama that it will forget to cough.

According to a Harley Street doctor most involuntary move-

ments of the "nervous tic" order are capable of being temporarily controlled by any one of us provided there is sufficient distraction to make this possible.

### Not in Ourselves

IT would seem, according to the readers of *THE SUNDAY TIMES*, that the fault is not wholly with the audience. If the playwright and the actor perform their basic task of taking people out of themselves the mind will no longer pay heed to the message from the lungs or the bronchial tubes.

At least that is the majority opinion of my correspondents. The fault for once, dear Brutus, is in the stars.

### A Welcome Visitor

THERE could be no more welcome visitor from America than Mr. Harold Stassen, who is now among us. He is the President's assistant on disarmament and is here to discuss

that agreeable subject with the Government.

Mr. Stassen is good-looking, vigorous and intelligent. Yet he has never achieved the position in American politics that would seem to be his right. At the time of the Munich crisis he was furious with the President for not sending a naval squadron into the Mediterranean. He held very strongly the view that America needed only to declare an open alliance with Britain and France for Hitler to be overthrown. When America came into the war Stassen went on active service with the Navy.

He is that attractive type which remains American in style and speech but is fundamentally a world citizen. As a realist and as a friend he is a most welcome visitor to our shores.

### Home at No. 10

WHEN one thinks of No. 10 Downing Street it is usually in terms of crisis or strain.

Ministers are summoned there to meet an unforeseen emergency and there are nearly always spectators who gaze with awe upon the door with the fateful number plate.

But No. 10 is a home as well as an office and Lady Dorothy Macmillan is a warm and charming hostess. At intervals she invites a number of M.P.s and their wives to tea with the full approval of her youthful grandchildren. She does not fuss about the guests or the children but creates an easy, friendly atmosphere as if No. 10 were merely a home with no direct connection with politics.

She and the Prime Minister must look back with happy memories to the far-off days when he was A.D.C. at Ottawa to her father the Duke of Devonshire, and ponder on the vagaries of fate that brought him through war and peace to supreme political office.

Neither the Prime Minister nor anyone else can foretell what the future holds, or how

long their tenancy will last, but already they have stamped their personality upon the place. Lady-Dorothy gives out a calm good-humoured warmth



A smile from the Prime Minister at No. 10.

that softens even the view of the Horse Guards Parade.

One can almost feel that there is an invisible sign on the door-plate: "Business on the first floor. Home life upstairs."

### A Bridge Bequest

WHAT a pity that St. James's Park should be defaced at this time by the building of a new bridge across the lake! Apparently the legacy of a well-meaning donor demanded that the work should be completed during the year 1957. The old, besmudged bridge is now a bruised and broken thing while the temporary substitute bridge looks like something to serve a log camp.

But even if we have to accept this ugly temporary substitute for a time we shall still have the view of Buckingham Palace with its

uninspired but reassuring solidity, as if nothing could ever happen to disturb its dignified immortality. And in the view to the east there are the turrets of Whitehall looking as if Constantinople had come to the banks of the Thames.

In a perfectly controlled society the new bridge would have been completed during the winter months whereas now we are doomed to a noisy hammering and flame-belching in the period of its normal enchantment.

Neville Chamberlain and his wife used to walk every morning in St. James's Park during their time at No. 10. It has a stately yet gentle charm which lingers in the mind and the senses.

### People and Words

"I know about the law. I know about politics. Now I want to get to know more about the real world outside."

—SIR HARLEY SHAWGROSS, Q.C.

"I spend a good deal of my life killing malicious gossip."

—THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

"With a husband, a son, and a son-in-law talking politics all day and with grandchildren who press their remarks with 'When I am Prime Minister, I think it is a good idea to have someone in the family willing to listen rather than talk!'"

—LADY DOROTHY MACMILLAN

"It is the duty of a Government to govern and in the best interests of the country this must be done without continuous sidelong glances at the electorate."

—VISCOUNT HARGREAVE, Minister of Education

"What is so remarkable about golf is that the longer one goes or with it the more one enjoys it!"

—LORD BRABAZON OF TARA

"Unless we allow the middle classes to retain more of their income, they will simply go else where. The influence of emigration upon Treasury policy may prove beneficial for us all."

—MR. W. F. DEERES, M.P.